

PROPOSAL: The Soviet Union may have the power at this time to end the superpower arms race, by making "an offer that the US cannot refuse." It could do so by linking a proposal for a bilateral freeze on the testing, production and deployment of any new nuclear weapons (which would preclude the deployment of Pershing or cruise missiles, among others) with an offer to destroy SS-4, SS-5 and SS-20 missiles down to a level that would be, in fact, acceptable to the European members of NATO: say, 50 SS-20s (with no additions to those stationed in Asia). (Reagan's main public objection to the freeze has been the "imbalance" endangering our allies in Europe).

Thus, Andropov would propose to the U.S! a "package" deal on reducing Soviet theater-level weapons and freezing all others, prior to comprehensive reductions, consisting of the following elements:

1. A bilateral, verifiable, permanent halt on the testing and production and deployment of all nuclear warheads and all vehicles intended primarily for delivery of nuclear warheads.
2. The destruction of all SS-4, SS-5 missiles, and reduction of SS-20s within range of European targets to some figure between 50 and 100, with no redeployment to the East and with destruction of the rest. (Continued testing, and deployment or production of the Pershing, cruise, or the SS-21, 22 or 23 would be banned by the freeze).
3. An immediate moratorium on the flight testing of all nuclear missiles and all warhead testing, and all production and deployment of warheads and missiles, at the onset of negotiations toward a formal, bilateral treaty on a permanent, verifiable freeze.

DISCUSSION:

Reagan would never initiate such a proposal, nor would he welcome it; almost surely, he would prefer to continue a two-sided arms race under current lines. But changes in his political environment just in the last six to nine months may well have made it almost impossible for him to reject such a package. (Even if he did so, stubbornly accepting great political costs, the Soviets would seem to have little to lose by having made the proposal; and such a rejection might be politically effective grounds for a German government to reject or postpone the stationing of missiles on its soil).

Some of these factors are as follows:

(a) The American constituency supporting the freeze--some 70% of the public--could and almost surely would press Congress into strong support of this offer.

(b) European governments could show public support for this proposal--as a new suggestion breaking out of the confinement of either strategic or theater weapons talks--without appearing "disloyal" to the Reagan position in the INF negotiations considered separately.

(c) The Soviets have already indicated, in the UN, their support for a freeze at this time. (They may not be so willing just two years from now, when some Pershings and GLCMs may be deployed, which is why it seems urgent to consider this approach now, even under Reagan, rather than to wait for his successor).

(d) Although Reagan would undoubtedly prefer to continue the arms race (and his stubbornness on such ideological commitments is great), he would face very serious risks in rejecting this offer, especially when his defense budget is perceived as the major cause of his deficit problem. If he overcame his scruples, he could claim credit for having forced the Soviets to produce a deal "better than the Freeze movement demanded," and protecting and satisfying our European allies. It could win him reelection.